



# Employee Newsletter

FEBRUARY 2011

## EMPLOYEE NEWS

Our **phone system** is being **upgraded**. Recently, Call Pilot, our voicemail system, was upgraded. You should notice no difference in the features at this point. In March, the rest of the system upgrade will be completed. For a 2 week period in March, you won't be able to add, move or change #'s. So any changes needed, should be done now. Call Dee Waters if you have questions at 641-7888.

Latosha Spruell-Jenkins (DSS) is requesting **voluntary shared leave**. If you would like to donate, contact Carolyn Hedgepeth at 641-7832

County Employees can get a **15% discount at US Cellular**. See Employee Info page on website for more details.

With gas prices soaring, we ask that employees who drive a county vehicle to do all you can to **conserve gas**: be sure your vehicle is maintained and tire pressure is adequate; unless otherwise instructed, only purchase regular unleaded gas; drive only when necessary and carpool whenever possible.



## From the County Manager

In 2009, the County Commissioners hired Springsted Incorporated to conduct a pay classification and compensation study to thoroughly review all aspects of the County's existing system. The purpose of the study was to develop a compensation system that would address internal equity among county positions and make the county more competitive in the regional labor market through our compensation program.

The results of the study revealed that 70% of non-law enforcement and 54% of law enforcement employees were paid at a rate below the minimum salary rate of the newly assigned pay grade. The County Commissioners as a part of the budgetary process, back in May of 2010, voted to implement the new pay plan in January of this year.

As a part of this process, a comprehensive wage and benefits survey of public sector employers was conducted. Sixty-five (65) benchmark positions were included in the survey. The benchmark positions reflected a cross-section of county positions and were chosen to highlight those with high turnover and recruitment/retention issues. Sixteen of

nineteen of the agencies that were identified responded to the survey, which was an excellent response rate. This high response rate validates the proposed salary ranges.

Implementation of the recommendations is expected to help the County attract new employees and retain current employees. This is critical in meeting the County's ever-increasing service demands. It is the goal of the County to develop administrative procedures that will provide for annual salary adjustments based on market and economic conditions and adjustments that recognize individual performance and growth.

Soon, you will have access to the new Edgecombe County 2011 salary and classification plan. You will see the plan includes a step and grade pay scale that shows 5% between grades and 2.5% between steps for non-law enforcement personnel and 1.5% between grades and 2.5% between steps for law enforcement.

Thank you again for all that you do for the citizens of Edgecombe County.

### Dates to Remember

- Commissioners' Meeting Feb 7th at 7:00 PM
- Dept Head Meeting Feb 9th at 8:30 AM
- **Valentines Day Feb 14th (friendly reminder for the guys)**
- Dept Head Meeting Feb 23rd at 8:30 AM

## Your Flexible Spending Account Is Not Quite as Flexible

The Affordable Care Act passed by Congress, which went into affect Jan. 1st, made some changes to your health FSA's (Flexible Spending Account). In particular, this provision now limits the use of your FSA for the purchase of over-the-counter medications. Here are a few FAQ's that may help you understand these changes, and make the best use of your FSA.

**Q. How are the rules changing for reimbursing the cost of over-the-counter medicines and drugs from health flexible spending arrangements (health FSAs) and health reimbursement arrangements (HRAs)?**

A. Section 9003 of the Affordable Care Act established a new uniform

standard for medical expenses. Effective Jan. 1, 2011, distributions from health FSAs and HRAs will be allowed to reimburse the cost of over-the-counter medicines or drugs only if they are purchased with a prescription. This new rule does not apply to reimbursements for the cost of insulin, which will continue to be permitted, even if purchased without a prescription.

**Q. How are the rules changing for distributions from health savings accounts (HSAs) and Archer Medical Savings Accounts (Archer MSAs) that are used to reimburse the cost of over-the-counter medicines and drugs?**

A. In accordance with Section 9003 of the Affordable Care Act, only

prescribed medicines or drugs (including over-the-counter medicines and drugs that are prescribed) and insulin (even if purchased without a prescription) will be considered qualifying medical expenses and subject to preferred tax treatment.

**Q. When will the changes become effective?**

A. The changes are effective for purchases of over-the-counter medicines and drugs without a prescription after Dec. 31, 2010. The changes do not affect purchases of over-the-counter medicines and drugs in 2010, even if they are reimbursed after Dec. 31, 2010.

*For more info and FAQ's, go to the Employee Information & Downloads page on our website.*

## Get to Know Your Commissioners

Chairman Leonard Wiggins is in his 4th Term as County Commissioner, and 2nd term as Chairman. He is a retired state employee, having enjoyed a long and productive career at the NC Department of Administration, Human Relations Commission. Mr. Wiggins has been married for 46 years to Mrs. Selma Smith-Wiggins, and they have one son, L. Lamont Wiggins. Lamont is an attorney and is on the Rocky Mount City Council.



## THE IRS COUNTDOWN IS ON. GET HELP TO BEAT THE BUZZER!



This year, you have two more options when it comes to tax preparation. Through their volunteer Income Tax Assistance Program (VITA), the Local Government Federal Credit Union can help you prepare your 2010 Tax Returns.

Option 1: Have your basic taxes prepared and filed for **free** if you have a household income of \$49,000 or less.

Option 2: If your household income is more than \$49,000, have your basic taxes prepared and filed for just \$75.

You can also receive a 15% discount for Turbo Tax. Simply contact your local branch to schedule an appointment between January 20 and April 15.

The IRS also offers assistance programs to help with tax preparation. If your adjusted gross income is \$58,000 or less, you can use Free File Tax Software. Everyone is eligible to use the Free File Fillable Forms. You can also e-file for free, use direct deposit and pay electronically. Visit IRS.gov for more info or to start filing now.

## Baby Aspirins Not Just for Babies Anymore!

If you suspect that you or someone you know may be having a heart attack, the first move should always be to dial 911. Medical experts also recommend that while waiting for the ambulance, have the patient chew two baby aspirins or at least half of a regular aspirin. Chewing it is key because it will allow it to work much faster, and time is critical.

OSHA (Occupation Safety & Health Administration) has approved aspirin to be included in first aid kits, but does not require it. It may be wise to add it to your kit. It just may save a

Chairman Wiggins' vision for the board is to continue to work to improve the quality of life for our citizens, as well as for our employees. He believes that it is important to reduce our tax rate, and to continue with efforts in economic development that will create and sustain jobs.

To all employees, Mr. Wiggins would like to thank you for your work and support of the county, and encourages all of you to continue the excellent job you are doing and the customer service you are offering.